



# PORTALS

**The Literary Journal of  
Purdue University North Central**





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**Volume 19**

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# FOREWORD

*Portals*, a publication of Purdue University North Central, is comprised of the winning entries of the PU/NC Writing Contest, sponsored by the Letters and Languages Section and funded from proceeds of the annual book sale. Works in the Freshman Contest were submitted by students in composition classes, while those in the Open Contest were from the student body at-large. One prize-winning entry was the result of a collaborative effort of three students, an innovation requiring a special category and suggesting, perhaps, a new direction for creative endeavors.

As this issue will reveal, PU/NC students are examining their world with thoughtfulness and sensitivity, aware of their responsibility to continue the search for creative and humane resolutions of its problems. In this sense, *Portals* provides a forum in which PU/NC's community of scholars can share its concern.

Director and Editor  
Student Writing Contest

Professor Barbara Lootens

Faculty Judges

Dr. Thomas Young  
Dr. John Pappas  
Dr. Roger Schlobin  
Professor Hal Phillips

Student Judges

Marian Smith  
Meribeth Swartz  
Andrea Todd  
Sharon White

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# A HOT SUMMER DAY

## by Crystal Burkhart

It was a hot summer Sunday morning in one of those older established neighborhoods. The neighborhood was the kind that makes you think of values like honesty, caring, and integrity. The houses along the street were typical of any Midwestern neighborhood—you could almost feel the importance of home and family as you looked at each one. The early '60's was an idyllic time: there was an essence of innocence in the air.

The family was busy getting ready for church when they heard the ambulance and police car roar down their street and stop nearby. All of them ran upstairs to see where the vehicles stopped. They pulled into the driveway of a home about four houses away. Everyone was alarmed and scared, but especially the ten-year-old daughter, for this was happening at the home of her best girl friend. The mother of the family, gently but firmly, pulled everyone away from the window by saying, "We will just have to wait and see."

The days passed. The girl was worried and anxious. Her friend Cheryl was not around the neighborhood anymore. She had run down the street several times to see if her friend was home, but no one was ever there. She knew that the ambulance had not come to take Cheryl to the hospital, but what could have happened? And what about the police car—why was it there? And why was everyone being so quiet and secretive?

One day the mother sat down to talk with her daughter. She told her that her best friend would not be living down the street anymore—Cheryl had gone to live with her grandmother. The ten-year-old's mind raced with questions: "Did the ambulance come to take Cheryl's mom or dad to the hospital? Was one of them dead? Was Cheryl all right? If the ambulance had not come for someone in Cheryl's family, who had it come for? Why was the police car there?"

Slowly the mother answered her daughter's questions. Yes, Cheryl was all right. Yes, Cheryl was safe. The ambulance had not come for her mom or dad. But because Cheryl would be living with her grandmother, the chances were that the two girls would never see each other again.

The mother explained that the ambulance had gone to their neighbor's house that Sunday to take a college girl to the hospital, where she later died. Cheryl's mother had been taken to jail, where she was awaiting trial. The mother, gently as possible, told her daughter, "Cheryl's mother was arrested for performing illegal surgery on college girls."

The daughter never saw her friend again. Cheryl's mother was found guilty and sent to prison.

Years later, I finally put the pieces together; my best girl friend's mother was sent to prison because she had performed an abortion on the college girl. Somehow, until that moment, the topic of abortion had always seemed to be a distant issue—it only affected other people.

The attempted abortion that took place down the street from my house not only affected the life of a college girl, but the surgery and the girl's ultimate death had radically changed my life, my girl friend's life, and the lives of her entire family.

Because I was finally able to understand what happened that hot summer day in the early '60's, I realized that abortion doesn't affect just the unborn baby or just the baby's mother. I know that this event is what is responsible for my feelings concerning the abortion issue.

I am strongly in favor of a woman's having the choice of whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. But a woman needs to know that the surgery will be performed by a professional. She needs to know that the surgery will be performed in an environment that is clean and sterile. She needs to know that every effort will be made to aid her recovery. She needs to know that the surgery will NOT be performed on someone's dining room table, where she might die.



# MIDDLE-AGE: TO BE OR NOT TO BE

by Sharon White

Middle-aged men vary from age 40-60; however, middle-aged women are perpetually 39. If middle-aged men have hair, it is gray; on the other hand, middle-aged women have hair, and it is not gray. Obviously, there is more than one middle-aged stereotype in our society.

The stereotypical middle-aged man, after working eight hours, watches ball games on TV, consumes beer, and falls asleep on the couch. On weekends this hunk mows the lawn, washes the car, watches ball games on TV, drinks beer, and falls asleep on the couch. This sedentary life style seems to suit him fine; after all, he works hard, and deserves to watch ball games on TV, drink beer, and fall asleep on the couch. On rare occasions Mr. Middle Age may go fishing with his buddies, where they drink beer, talk about how rough life is, and go home to fall asleep on the couch. Mr. Middle Age has but one goal in life: retirement, with plenty of time to watch ball games on TV, drink beer, and fall asleep on the couch.

The stereotypical middle-aged woman is a subserviant, docile, boring creature. She is eternally 39 years old, with her hair coiffured in the latest, middle-aged, beauty shop style. She wears a house dress or polyester pants and top while slopping about the house all day. Mrs. Middle Age watches all the soap operas on TV and talks about the actors as if they were her friends. She crochets afghans for her children, whether they want them or not. On Saturday she bakes chocolate chip cookies for the times she babysits with her grandchildren. When not gossiping on the telephone, she tends her flower garden and worries about what to prepare for supper. She has no goals of her own, other than her family's happiness.

Paradoxically, we have a real middle-aged male and female. An examination of their activities will show that these two do not remotely resemble the stereotype of middle age.

Mr. Real Middle Age (Mr. RM) has some hair with some gray in it. He is age 60 and retired after 33 years of servitude. Mr. RM taught his wife Morse code and electronic theory so they can share his amateur radio hobby. He taught her to fly a balloon and ride a motorcycle. Mr. RM makes pottery and dabbles in stained glass work, occasionally. His hobbies are many and varied. Sometimes he is up all night developing and printing photographs or just talking with Ms. RM. Lately, all of these hobbies are on the back burner because Mr. RM has started going to college. He has never watched a ball game on TV and has attended only one live professional baseball game. His beer consumption is about one case every three years. Sleep on the couch? Never! He likes the warm body of Ms. RM next to him.



Ms. Real Middle Age (Ms. RM) has some gray hair, big deal! She is age 47 and not at all ashamed of it. Who in the world would want to be 39 forever? Even cheese and wine get better with age. Ms. RM thinks of herself as a fine wine, improving with age. Ms. RM rarely watches TV; the set is used as a computer monitor. She spends hours playing with computer programming and word processing. Ms. RM may crochet a sweater, but afghans are too bothersome. If her children want afghans, she will teach them to crochet. She bakes when the mood strikes, but bakery cookies are excellent. On a nice evening she may ride her motorcycle to a friend's house for a cup of coffee and idle conversation. On the weekend she may turn on the transceiver and hear a contest brewing on 10 meters; of course, she has to add her two cents worth. If it is perfect weather, Mr. and Ms. RM may float serenely over the country side in their hot air balloon. Ms. RM is a college student studying to be a clinical psychologist. Her children, now young adults, are more or less self-sufficient. She has been known to go watch male strippers, while Mr. RM stays home taking a nap in anticipation. Ms. RM mows the lawn but leaves the flowers to Mr. RM. This '80's Lady is much too busy living to be a bored, docile creature.

This contrast between stereotype and reality shows the injustice and fallacy of stereotyping. Stereotyping comes about by a surface perception of a class of people, who may or may not be typical of the group. A group is judged by a few, not necessarily representative members. The members of a group most noticeable or notable are the deviants, not the norm.

Stereotyping is usually very inaccurate and sometimes quite unfair. Consider the stereotypical middle-aged person; he or she is perceived as dull, finished with life, just existing with nothing important left to do. Does this describe you? Or me? No, it certainly does not, and we are no different from many others. The stereotype does exist, in very small numbers, and that is why the myth perpetuates.

Middle-aged men and women may have hair or not have hair, and their hair may or may not be gray. Middle-aged people can be any age from 40 to 60, more or less, but they are as individuals unique. Few of them actually fit the stereotype, and most of them are fascinating and interested in living life to the fullest. The stereotype gives a negative view of aging. Middle-age is actually the reward for surviving youth, offering the opportunity of a rewarding future to those of us willing to accept the challenge.

# DO WOMEN THINK DIFFERENTLY?

by Zuhair Al-Aaraji

Men and women seem to think differently. Researchers have been interested in finding a source for the differences between male and female intellectual activity; however, the scientific findings are still inconclusive. If there are differences between male and female intellectual abilities, they may be a result of family rearing and social stereotyping.

Life for males and females start with minor differences. Baby boys and girls have very few differences during the first months of their lives. People who have made fatuous comments about a pretty baby girl only to be informed that she is actually a boy recognize that the physical differences between male and female infants, or even children until puberty, are in fact very minimal (Sloane 97).

Of course, there are dissimilarities in men's and women's bodies. A male produces sperm and a female produces ovum. These are the primary sex differences and, with their appropriate sex organs, ducts and functions, are what make a male, male, and a female, female (Sloane 98; Fogel & Woods 77). But besides this, if we take a broader look at the male-female bodies, we see that the physical differences between the sexes are not very wide. There are many women who are taller, larger, and stronger than many men; some men have narrow shoulders and wide hips; and some women have narrow hips and small breasts. The physical differences in size, shape, strength, and stature that occur between two individuals of the same sex are often far greater than the degree of difference between two individuals of different sexes (Sloane 97).

Internally, males and females are very much the same with one exception. No one could distinguish the human kidney, liver, heart, spleen, or other organ of a man from that of a woman. The size and weight of these organs are more related to the size than the sex of the owner (Sloane 98). The major physical difference between any male and female is the reproductive system.

These physical and physiological sex differences are relative in terms of an average difference that occurs in a large population. Individual variation could be very large, and there could be a considerable overlap between the two sexes. People's genetic endowments have a lot to do with their appearance, and so do their nutrition (adequacy or inadequacy), physical activity, social and economic status, geographical location, climate, cultural differences, and many other factors. There is no difficulty in recognizing male and female's gender, but many of these signals are artificially exaggerated and emphasized by dress and behavior (Sloane 101).



Physiologically, females mature faster than males in their early years of life. The fact that girls mature faster than boys does not necessarily imply that they begin to age sooner, although they may, despite their greater average longevity (Maccoby 39), nor does it imply that their brains are different from those of males.

The weight of the human brain varies with age, stature, body weight, and sex. When compared to average body stature and weight, the size and weight of the brain in males and females are proportionally equal. The brain weighs about 380 grams (13 ounces) at birth and grows rapidly during the first three years of life, approaching its mature weight at about the seventh year; then the increase becomes very gradual. The average weight in males is about 1400 grams (50 ounces) and in females is about 1260 (45 ounces). This weight is usually attained by the 20th year. From this period onward, in males and females, there is a continuous decrease in the average brain weight of approximately one gram per year ("Brain" 466).

Much was made of the fact that the female brain usually weighs less than the male's to prove the lesser intellectual capacity and ability of a woman, until it was recognized scientifically that the range in brain weight of adults is very great, and that proportionally, males and females differ less in brain weight than in total body weight (Sloane 98).

A new theory has been formulated which states that behavioral capacity, a broad term which indicates intelligence, is related not to the size of the brain but to the index of cephalization- the amount of brain tissue in excess of that required for transmitting to and from the brain (Mavor 442). Recent studies have shown that a progressive evolutionary encephalization relative to body size occurs in vertebrates and culminates in human beings. The evolutionary development of the human forebrain is very important to encephalization; a greatly expanded and convoluted mantle containing neuronal centers is necessary for understanding and producing language, for conceptualization and abstraction, for judgment, and for the capacity of human beings to consider thoughtfully and influence their lives (Mavor 443).

Despite the great progress in understanding the function of the human brain, researchers remain totally ignorant about how the brain performs its basic job: how it transforms ten watts of electricity and some chemicals into thoughts, feelings, dreams, and memories of male and female human beings (Pines 4). But most scientists, today, know that hormones, important substances that affect human behavior, are produced by an order from the brain.

There are more than ten trillion cells that make up the human body. Only those that are specialized into the reproductive system result in the physical differences between males and females. The functioning of all the rest of the systems is dedicated to the vital activity or survival of the individual; only the reproduction system and its hormones, which account for the anatomical variation between the sexes, are dedicated to the survival of the species (Sloane 98).



Hormones are very important in producing the essential physical changes between male and female. With puberty, visible physical changes develop as a result of the secretion of a high amount androgen in males and high estrogen in females. The effect of these steroids is essentially on the same target organs (Sloane 100). Males, therefore, develop a deeper voice, greater facial bone growth, and more hair on the face. As the ability to reproduce is attained, the testes in males are able to produce millions of sperm; the male is able to impregnate a female; and thus he can father a child. Females have menstrual cycles, generally produce one egg a month through ovulation, can become pregnant and carry a fetus for nine months, give birth, and nurse. In other words, females menstruate, ovulate, gestate, parturate, and lactate (Sloane 99); males do not experience these functions. It is possible that these functions may affect both male and female intellectual ability; however, such studies are, as yet, inconclusive.

Through the preschool years and in the early school years, girls have a tendency to do better than boys in most aspects of verbal performance. They say their first word sooner, are endowed with the power of speech more clearly and at an earlier age, use longer sentences, and are more fluent. Girls learn to read sooner in the beginning of school, and there are more boys than girls who require special training in remedial reading programs; but by approximately the age of ten, boys start to catch up in their reading skills. Throughout the school years, girls do better than boys on tests of spelling, grammar, and word fluency (Maccoby 26). Recent research continues to support female superiority on verbal performances. It is true that whenever a sex difference is found, it is usually girls and women who obtain higher scores, but the two sexes perform very similarly on a number of verbal tasks in a number of sample populations (Maccoby & Jacklin 75).

Girls surpass boys in their number ability, learning to count at an earlier age; however, through the school years, there are no consistent sex differences in skill at arithmetical computation. Boys, during grade school years, often begin to forge ahead on tests of "arithmetical reasoning," although a number of studies reveal no sex differences on this dimension. Boys excel at arithmetical reasoning in high school, and the differences are substantially in favor of men among college students and adults (Maccoby 27). It is frequently suggested that boys' superiority in math during the high school years simply reflects their greater interest in this field because they feel the need to use math for their later careers (Maccoby & Jacklin 85).

Young boys and girls do not differ on spatial tasks such as forming boards and block design. But during the early school years boys consistently do better on spatial tasks, and this difference continues through the high school and college years (Maccoby 27). Some recent studies showed no sex differences until adolescence. But other studies showed that boys' superiority over girls on this factor increases substantially through high school years (Maccoby & Jacklin 94).

Analytic ability is higher among boys than girls. Analytic ability is used to refer to the ability to respond to one aspect of a stimulus situation without being greatly influ-



enced by the background in which it is presented. Boys use analytic groupings more commonly than girls (Maccoby 27). Recent studies showed that girls are not less able than boys to inhibit an initial response tendency while engaging in systematic problem-solving. Nevertheless, there may be some differences between male and female in specific elements of the problem-solving processes that don't rely on any generalized ability in response inhibition (Maccoby & Jacklin 101).

Male and female seem different in the degree of their creativity. If creativity is the ability to break, set, or restructure a problem, there is a tendency for boys and men to be superior. If creativity is thought of in terms of divergent, as distinct from convergent, thinking, the evidence appears to favor girls (Maccoby 27).

In general, girls get better grades than boys throughout the school years, even in subjects in which boys score higher on standard achievement tests. After graduation from school or college men achieve much more than women in almost every aspect of intellectual activity. A research study of gifted children showed that while gifted boys tended to realize their potential in their social and scientific occupations and creative output, gifted girls did not (Maccoby 28). There are some factors that work against female intellectual capability.

Girls seem to be more afraid of failure, and more disorganized by it, than boys. When women working on a fairly difficult task were told that they were not doing well on it, their level of aspiration declined (Maccoby 32). A researcher working with college students found that when women were working on a fairly difficult task and were told that they were not doing well, both their level of aspiration and their performance declined as compared with a control group of women who did not receive this negative feedback (Maccoby 32).

Family and society play a major role in undermining female abilities to achieve significant gains in social and scientific fields. Achievement motivations are higher for males than females (Mischel 71). Achievement motivation was increased for males, but not for females, following a test reported to measure intelligence under conditions designed to stimulate achievement needs (Mischel 71). This could be due to social stereotype.

Members of each sex are encouraged in and become interested in, and proficient at the kinds of tasks that are most relevant to the roles they are expected to fill in the future. Boys in high school forge ahead in math because they and their parents and teachers know they may become engineers or scientists; girls know that they are unlikely to need math in the future. Adult women, most of whom become housewives or work at jobs that do not require serious intellectual demands, decline in their intelligence ability because they are not using their intellectual capacity as men do. Women who are busy managing households and rearing children do not have serious commitment for creativity (Maccoby 40). Women's management of their households sets them back in the scientific field.

In 77 years, only 17 women and 437 men have won Nobel Prizes in literature and science. These figures do not take into account the 13 organizations (usually headed by men) that have won Peace Prizes (Opfell xiii). On December 10, 1975, laureates descended on Stockholm for the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Nobel Prizes, only one woman stood among them. At that time Dorothy Hodgkin was the only representative of a small group of only fourteen female laureates. Among her more than seventy-five male scientific colleagues, she used to be the only woman at scientific meetings. She said: "After all, women have come rather late to science." Someone else commented that women have to be twice as determined and to work twice as hard as men (Opfell xiv).

Human evolution is often heavily biased toward presumed male activities, with the behavior of the human female often virtually ignored (Broughton 247). But recent studies by social anthropologists have begun to turn the tide against this bias. Emerging from studies of modern hunting-and-gathering societies is the fact that it is the gathering activities of the women that provide the main basis for group subsistence (Broughton 247). Any complete theory of the evolution of human behavior must account for the evolution of the female as well as the male.

Family has its share in undermining the female role in society, for parents have made the greatest distinctions in rearing of boys and girls in the areas of aggression (Mischel 73) and motivation. Traditionally, boys are allowed to show or express aggression toward their parents and other children, while girls are not allowed to do this. Girls are more praised when they demonstrate "feminine" behavior (Mischel 73). Scientists believe that women are less toughminded and more conservative. They are more in favor of peace, more opposed to war and arms' manufacture. They are more on the side of law and order (Eysenck 156). They are more prudish and show more guilt than men (Eysenck 222).

In spite of these differences, there is no scientific justification to use the term "male brain" or "female brain." It is more accurate to refer to the brain of a person, male or female, as an individual brain. Every person thinks differently from others. Some males think differently from other males; some females think differently from other females. Generally, intellectual ability is not determined by sex. Men and women, males and females, have in common one machine that can store information, produce thoughts, and express feelings—the human brain.

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# A STRANGE REASON TO WRITE

by Mary Kelley

Some years ago, I wrote for many reasons: letters to my friends, articles for a newspaper and a house organ. I kept a journal to express my feelings or thought and even wrote articles to magazines in hopes of selling them. Perhaps the pressure of deadlines stirred my creative juices and/or I felt the need to communicate my thought to others.

One night I felt strangely compelled to take my portable typewriter up to my bedroom and place it on a desk in front of a window overlooking Lake Michigan. This in itself was odd, because I always wrote in the kitchen where the light was good.

At that time I don't remember having anything in mind about which to write, but I felt that something was pushing me up the stairs. When my fingers touched the key, the words started to pour out and the whole scheme became clearer.

I wrote furiously most of the night; it was almost as if I were being guided by some other force and it was exhilarating. When I finally finished, I was totally exhausted, yet somehow fulfilled. I read the words I had written and was amazed to see that there were many words and phrases I would not normally have used. My finished work was a mystery drama entitled "The Girl in the Pink Pajamas."

The following day, I re-read the story and thought it had some merit. I took it to my neighbor, an accomplished and published author, for his critique. He said it was all right, but it would never sell.

The surprising climax of this narrative came a few days later. The author's wife called to say that they had watched a drama on TV the night before and that the plot, the language and the characters were identical to mine. Only the ending differed. I was stunned.

Since then I have had to ask myself some questions: Why was I compelled to write up in my bedroom? Was I, perchance, picking up thoughts or FM waves from across the lake? Why did I feel the urgency to write when I had nothing in particular on my mind? Was I a receiving station for thoughts not my own? And lastly, was there any reason for this?

In his essay "Writing", William Stafford tells us that the writer should be receptive. His concept is to put the words on paper and the thoughts will flow. Through my own personal experience, I can attest to this. I have saved that story I wrote so long ago. I will never do anything with it, but it serves as a reminder of an unusual experience and stands as proof of Mr. Stafford's theory of receptivity.



# MARTHA'S PLIGHT

## by Susan Barriball

Dear Martha,

It was so good to hear of your recent luck. Buying one ticket a week really paid off. Now you are asking for my advice, and, my dear, you have come to the right person. It was wise of you to seek counsel from someone knowledgeable in money matters.

Martha, I will advise you right off not to employ the services of a lawyer since they are all known to possess a fetish when it comes to money. They may be somewhat narcissistic and show-offs in the use of their money and yours. So you will be much better off taking the money into your own hands.

Start off, Martha, by donating a tidy sum for a charitable use and do not dare feel this is a guilty use of the money. You will probably receive some nice publicity from this act of generosity. But, actually, one might consider giving the donation anonymously. Without the publicity, you would be able to continue your denial of economic status. I would definitely stick to the story of pretended poverty for awhile, or you would have every Tom, Dick, and Henrietta at your door for a handout. And you certainly do not want people to think of you as a young child throwing money from your mother's pocketbook.

Speaking of your mother, how is she? Do you remember when you were about seven years old and found out every other kid out there had more money than you? And you thought your mom did not love you because she would not allow you more spending money. Well, she had more than she said, and she never really did love you. My mother, her sister, told me, and I thought you should know now so that you may make proper decisions. My mother and I always loved you much more! It hurts me so to think of the little stint you had to do in that girls' home since you were forced to the life of crime to get the money you so deserved. And it pains even more to think of what you had to tolerate in your teen years with the Thompson boys and their friends just to earn... let us not talk about it. It is over, and you have come into your own fortune.

I am sorry, for I have gotten off the track. Now, you definitely need to get out of this compulsive nonspending mode you acquired following your daddy's accident. Girl, there is no sense being conservative, economical, or stingy with that money. You do not want close friends and certain relatives to think you are a tight-wad. Your relationships with others have really suffered because of your attitude toward money. Behind your back, people have been referring to you as chiseler and a sponger. Why before you know it, some swindler will come along and see that you are so anxious to see this money increase without much exertion from you. You will fall in his trap!

Dear, this is not to imply you should become a compulsive spender. Oh, there is nothing worse! Buying all those unnecessary items and spending just to do so. Uncle Ralph, God rest his soul, was just this type of spender. He never thought he had enough money or possessions. Ralph earned a good wage, but he spent every penny on frivolous things. And then poor Uncle Rufus would get the call to bail Ralph out of his financial woes. Rufus always liked Ralph—the Lord only knows why! Ralph's problem, I often said, was due to that overindulgent mother of his. She worked in that office all day and scrubbed floors at night just to give little Ralph anything he wanted. She thought she had to make up to him for his daddy's running off with that floosy who ran the all-night pool hall. But the money never seemed to be enough, and Uncle Ralph never felt loved. But with his gift of gab, he could talk the skin off a snake and get what he wanted. Those flashy clothes and fast cars were sure to mean trouble, and, sure enough, Uncle Ralph lived out his days in that stinking jail.

Now, Martha, there is absolutely no reason for you to be indecisive or fearful about how you are to use this money. I am sure you will make the proper decisions as to who will share in your good fortune. Before I forget, you will never believe who I ran into the other day. Crazy McCooney—the policeman that investigated your father's accident! He just could not believe it had been eight years. Anyway, one thing led to another, and he asked me how that sweet Samantha Hopkins, the librarian in your town, was doing. I told him fine and asked why the interest. Well, he proceeds to tell me that your daddy had the accident because he spent the money for the brake job on that sweet Samantha earlier that day. When I asked what he could possibly have bought for her, he named some underwear store that starts with an "F", I believe. I was simply stunned, and I am sure you are glad to have this out in the open now that you have all these decisions to make. Some people would feel a need to use their money in an emotionally punitive way hearing this, Martha. But I know your head is on straight, and I have no worry along that line.

Let me finish this informative letter by making you aware of something I read in one of those grocery store magazines the other day. I read in an article about something called money-sickness, and, honey, I sure am hoping you don't catch it! It can be quite nasty! Why you can be manic and start buying everything in sight, not even knowing what was bought. Or depressed and become more so each time you have to spend. And paranoid spenders do not spend much because they are too busy hiding it in their underwear so nobody knows they have money. Then there is what I consider the worst—schizophrenic. I believe this to be the worst, Martha, because after spending all that lovely money, you do not know what you spent it on, or you deliberately buy junk. What a curse!

The best we can hope for, Martha, is after reading this letter from me you will know how to use your money in an emotionally well-balanced way. Always make sure you have your necessities, a savings, and, once in awhile, a luxury for yourself (like a fifty-



nine cent taco). Following all this advice will be beneficial, I am sure. Also, remember that momma and I love you like you are part of our family. (Did I ever tell you that you were actually adopted and none of those people you call "brother" and "sister" truly are?) Please take care, and if I can be of any more help, just give a holler.

Your loving cousin,  
Abigail

# ABUSE IS DEADLY

by Cynthia Tyree

As I sit on this fallen tree listening to the Earth awaken with mornings song, I feel its healing power. The pain within me subsides. I don't experience the pain all of the time, just too much of the time.

Even back then, whenever the screaming and beatings occurred, I would escape to my special place. It was a beautiful hilltop with the softest green grass and three pine trees clustered together providing shelter. The scent that came from the Earth comforted my tortured spirit as a loving mother comforts her child.

The woodland animals became my friends, listening to me express my anguish for hours. They were always busy flitting about doing their business, but I knew they cared. I assumed my friends were in pain too; after all, they shared my secret place.

I knew mistreatment of another living thing was wrong. How I knew this at such an early age I'm not sure, but somewhere inside of me a knowledge existed that abuse was desecrating.

The physical pain was more tolerable, for bruises and abrasions heal in time. Verbal abuse is not so kind. The sting of words wounds the heart and torments the soul.

A child comes into the world trusting and helpless. When he or she grows up living in an abusive situation, the result can be hideous. You believe what you are told, no matter how cruel.

Every time I would start to believe in myself and decide I did have worth, abuse smothered the spark of hope. Growing up believing you have no worth is destructive to even the strongest person. In all too many instances the victims of abuse never recover enough to believe in themselves. I know.

This war within myself is not to save my country, but it is to save my freedom. Whenever doubts fill my heart, I return to the solace of nature. She is still like a mother to me, comforting and soothing to my being. Here, I cannot deny my worth as an individual. I know someone loves me enough to bless me with the land.

I still deal with the anger and bitterness resulting from abuse on a daily basis. The silent battle rages inside of me. The desire to not be like this tree, fallen before my time, is utmost in my mind. I want to stand tall with my roots deep in the knowledge that I do matter. I can make a difference: indeed, I already have made a difference.



# WHAT IS BROWN?

by Claire Blackburn

Brian Mulligan

Tom Teets

Brown is molasses,  
A pecan,  
An echo in  
A canyon,  
A cookie,  
The smoothest color  
You can see.  
Brown is thick steak  
Eaten with zest  
At a family gathering  
On a day of rest.  
Brown is subtle  
Brown is soft  
It's autumn leaves  
And hay in the loft.  
Brown is crackling  
Brown is crunch  
The gooey peanut butter  
In a paper bag lunch.  
Brown is a brownie  
And also an owl  
Brown is the grumble  
Of a grizzly bear's growl.  
Brown is the satin fur  
Of the slippery otter  
The rapid pace  
Of a thoroughbred trotter.  
And in the winter  
When the snow is churning  
Brown is the aroma  
Of oakwood burning.

# THE BICYCLE

## by Susan Bortell

Memories are much like flowers. Some are lovely, staying in your heart to bring you pleasure forever. Others, lifeless and forlorn, are a lasting reminder that things are never as you'd like them to be.

In the mid '60's, medical assistants working in doctors' offices and hospitals wore white uniforms just as the nurses did. Many patients assumed we *were* nurses. Duties such as giving injections, doing blood pressure readings, and even assisting in the Emergency Room were given to MA's rather than putting the extra load on the already-overworked nursing staff.

As an MA, I worked many long evening and weekend hours. One Sunday afternoon during the usual rush, as was the norm, we were overcrowded. Some patients who arrived on Sunday weren't really emergency cases, just those who hadn't bothered to deal with their sore throats, colds, and flu symptoms during the week. They had these problems treated on weekends when they didn't have anything else to do; they assumed we didn't either.

As I was hurrying to clean a messy exam table so the doctor on call could see the next patient, a mother and small child entered the room. The little boy was bleeding from a large, deep laceration on his upper arm.

"He fell off his bike and cut hisself," the mother told me without much worry or conviction. "He's gotsta has sometin' done maybe some stitches."

"Poor kid has such a pitiful little face," I thought to myself as I motioned for his mother to bring him in. I lifted him onto the exam table.

Because you see so much pain when you work in an ER, you tend to become very matter of fact. Not uncaring, just matter of fact. I looked at the child again. His soft brown eyes were ready to spill over with tears, but he was silent. Hoping to ease his fear, I tried to start a conversation.

"Well, guy, how in the world did you fall off your bicycle? I'm sure you're a good rider. Must have been something in your way, right?" I tried to sound light.

There was no reply from the child, but his mother was quick to point out that he always had accidents. "Clumsy... he's allase hurtin' hisself," she said as she turned to leave the room.

Another thought crossed my mind, though not a kind one. I wondered to myself why this woman didn't choose to stay with her son to make sure his injuries weren't serious.



As I watched her, she leaned against the hallway wall and lit a cigarette, blowing smoke at the ceiling. She looked bored with the whole thing.

My attention turned back to the little boy. "What's your name, honey?" I asked him.

"Orin," was the only reply.

I started to scrub the wound, trying not to hurt him any more than was necessary. The gash was deeper than I had first imagined. As I scrubbed, the bleeding began again. Still no sound from Orin. What could be going on inside his head? Surely the child was feeling pain, yet he never made a sound.

Once again I tried to start a dialog with him. "Orin, I'm sorry if this is hurting you. I have to do it to make sure we get all the dirt out so you don't get an infection. You understand, don't you honey?"

"Yes," was his soft reply.

"The doctor will be here in a few minutes," I said, "and we're going to get you all fixed up." He just looked away. After scrubbing, I could then see the clean area of soft skin that surrounded the wound. The laceration was not jagged or torn, and there were no scratches or bruises on Orin's skin. A fall from a bicycle would have resulted in an injury that looked much different from this one.

Something was very wrong. I had dealt with enough screaming, terrified children to know that. Usually it took another staff member to help me prep a little child with a laceration as bad as this one. Orin just lay very still on the table and would not look at me. Maybe he was just a tough cookie; some kids tolerate pain better than others.

Cautiously, I tried another approach as I got the suture tray ready. "What kind of bike do you have, Orin? Tell me what color it is." Still no reply.

Doctor Stewart was working that night; when he walked in the door, I pulled him aside to explain the situation.

"This kid won't talk," I said, "Doctor, please, tell me how you think Orin *really* got that laceration. It looks too clean to have been caused by a fall from a bike. There are a few pieces missing here. I can't get anything out of him."

"Maybe he just doesn't like you," Stewart shot back with a quiet chuckle as he walked over to the table and started to talk to Orin. The boy answered questions with just a nod of his head. As I took my place at the table to assist the doctor, I looked down at Orin's dirty little face. It was the face of a little, scared child. I smiled at him. He showed no response, but as the doctor inspected the wound, Orin reached out and took my hand. No

words, just his little hand on mine. I closed my fingers around his and with my other hand brushed the hair off his forehead.

The doctor explained to Orin that he would have to give him a shot to numb the pain before he could suture the wound.

Again Orin did not reply. Twenty minutes of work and nine sutures were required to close the slash in Orin's arm. He never made a sound during the whole ordeal. He just held my hand. He blinked his eyes once because of the pain, but he never cried — he just stared at the overhead light.

When Doctor Stewart was finished, he shot me one of his famous "stay out of this" looks as he walked out of the room to talk to Orin's mother. I started to apply the dressing. Now Orin was looking at me.

"Well, champ, you sure were brave. You've got to promise me that you'll be more careful on your bike, okay?" I asked as he watched me. Getting no response, I went on. "Bicycles are wonderful things to have, but you sure can get hurt, can't you?" I said as I was applying the tape. I didn't want to push, but I just had to get through to this child; this just wasn't normal. "Are you sure you fell off your bike? You didn't hurt yourself some other way, did you, honey?"

He sat up on the table, still not answering me. Without thinking I leaned down and hugged him. His frail little body stiffened. Chiding myself for what I thought was a case of bad timing, I told him I'd see him again in a week when his mother brought him back to have the sutures removed. He almost smiled. My back was turned as he spoke.

"Hey, Nursie."

I turned to face him. "What, Orin?"

"Nursie — I don't got no bicycle," he spoke with calm resignation.

I choked back the feeling that was churning within me, but before I could reply, Orin's mother had entered the room. He fell silent once again. She took her copy of the ER form without saying anything and moved toward the door. Orin got off the table and followed her, never looking back. She never once touched him or asked him how he felt; she walked ahead of him as they left.

As I stood at the back door and watched them leave, tears stung my eyes. "That poor baby," I thought. I was trying to ease my own pain by assuring myself that I'd see him in a week. They walked, she and the child, through the parking lot, the mother lighting another cigarette while Orin walked slowly behind her.



"Yes, it will only be seven days and I can see him again. I can check on him to make sure he's alright," I thought to myself. "He'll be okay, I know he will." My heart ached as I thought of the life that little boy must have had. Maybe when he came back I could get him to talk to me a little more. Maybe I'd be able to find out what really happened. Maybe there would be some extra money to get him a bicycle, a real bike of his own. Maybe he'd have something to smile about after all. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

I never saw Orin again.

# LORD BYRON: FOR THE LOVE OF AUGUSTA LEIGH

by Meribeth Swartz

Lord Byron's position among the ranks of Romantic poets has been disputed by critics over the years. Even his contemporaries, with the exception of Shelley, who thought very highly of Byron's works, had little consideration for his literary accomplishments. However, the creation of his "Byronic hero," the defiant, passionate, roving character found in such works as Childe Harold and Manfred, qualifies him as a Romantic poet (Abrams 502-3). Similarly, Byron was passionate, temperamental, defiant, proud, bold, and daring, to mention but a few of his traits. Because of the public life he led, including numerous liaisons with women, the masses identified him with this character and accorded him the reputation of libertine. Unfortunately, this public consensus of him overshadowed Byron's distinction as a poet. In my research, I have discovered ingredients in his life that have shed a new light on him and his personality. In addition to the sometimes undesirable characteristics that have colored his reputation, Byron was also a gentle, compassionate, and honest man.

Evidence substantiating this claim lies in his relationship with one particular woman, his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. While there were many women in Byron's life, none meant more to him than she. It was because of this relationship that some of Byron's more favorable attributes have been revealed to us. Augusta and Byron were fathered by "Mad Jack Byron," a profligate who squandered the inheritances of Lady Carmarthen, Augusta's mother, and Catherine Gordon, Byron's mother (Marchand 12-20). Although the two were raised apart, there were occasions during their childhoods in which they were in one another's company. But as they grew older, many years intervened between such occasions. Then, in June, 1813, Augusta came to see Byron in London in hopes of securing from him financial aid for her and her husband, Colonel George Leigh. In short time, their relationship began to evolve into something more than a familiar one. Byron, already a public figure and under scrutiny for his numerous affairs and inappropriate behavior, found Augusta, five years his senior, to be understanding of his nature and sympathetic to his concerns. They felt quite comfortable in the presence of one another and spent much time together that summer, commencing an incestuous affair, lasting a year and a half (Marchand 395-6).

In January, 1815, Byron married Anna Isabella (Annabella) Milbanke. He did so with Augusta's blessings after her unsuccessful attempt at matching her brother with her good friend, Lady Charlotte Leveson Gower (Marchand 465, 471). The marriage was ill-fated from the beginning and ended a year later when Lady Byron, with a guarded suspicion about her husband's licentious relationship with his sister, left him. She returned with the couple's infant daughter, Ada Augusta, to her parents' home. Because of his sincerity, a trait often overlooked, Byron would be unable to deny the inevitable public accusations, so he left England in the spring of 1816, never to return alive.



Byron paid tribute to Augusta and to her love and loyalty in three poems, all written in 1816. The first two, Stanzas for Augusta ("When all around grew drear and dark") and Stanzas for Augusta ("Though the day of my Destiny's over"), were less revealing than the third and were intended for public audience. The third, Epistle to Augusta, a more intimate poem, was not published in 1816 out of respect for Augusta (Robinson 26).

The overall tone of Epistle to Augusta is of remorse, not for the commission of incest but for the pain and grief suffered by both because of it. The first part of the 16-stanza poem is a rationalization of events leading to Byron's current state of affairs. In the latter part Byron turns to nature for comfort, reminiscent of Wordsworth, whom Byron had been admiring at the time (Robinson 26).

In the first two stanzas, Byron calls to Augusta, professing his continued love for her, a love he will not give up in spite of the distance that separates them. He wishes for two things in life: to travel the world and to be with her. He acknowledges that Augusta has her own life, and he does not want to disrupt it further. She had married her first cousin on her mother's side in 1807 and had at that time of the poem four young children. (The fourth child, Medora, was reputedly conceived by Byron (Marchand 446), although Chapman, in Byron and the Honourable Augusta Leigh, disputes both the conception by Byron and the incestuous affair.)

Beginning with the last four lines of the second stanza, which refer to their shared parentage, and continuing through the next four stanzas, Byron rationalizes that although his behavior has resulted from his genetic make-up, he, nevertheless, shoulders the blame:

A strange doom is thy father's son, and past  
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress;  
Reversed for him our grandsire's fate of yore,—  
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

In the first two lines, he says that his destiny is inherent and cannot be changed. Then he compares their grandfather's turbulent life on the seas with his own in England. Their grandfather had earned the nickname "Foul-weather Jack" because the ships on which he sailed always met with storms (Brandes 255). Similarly, Byron's own life was stormy with the stress that accompanies a public figure's attempt at leading a private existence.

Continuing in the next two stanzas, Byron claims that if he had inherited other traits that did not contribute to his being a public figure, he still would have been responsible for his conduct. He received his passionate temperament not only paternally, but maternally as well. Both the Byron and Gordon families had histories of recklessness (Brandes 254-5, Marchand 3, Abrams 503-4). Therefore, it seems, Byron was twice doomed. While he takes the blame for his misdeeds, "The fault was mine," he does not feel the need to defend his behavior. He had conducted himself differently in public, though living up to the expectations of his fellow countrymen. Marchand, in the "Preface" to *Byron: A Biography*, says:

It is undeniable Byron did at times delight in shocking the British public, but not so much by striking an attitude or assuming emotions he had not, at least in some unguarded moments, felt, as by telling embarrassing truths about himself and, by implication, about human nature in general (x).

In the privacy of his close friends, Byron was his true self, a kinder and more compassionate man than the public knew. From birth, he continues, his life had been a game which at times had been played with difficulty, times when he felt like giving up. But now he gladly presses on, anticipating things yet to happen.

Having survived the public scorn of his past immoral behavior, Byron is troubled in the fifth stanza because the repercussions of his affection for Augusta were more than he expected. In the next stanza, he reiterates and expounds on his sentiments expressed previously about his public conduct. He speculates that his behavior could be a deliberate act against mores, or it could be a defense mechanism that entices him to do as he pleases to stun his public. But his effort to behave in an honest manner does not satisfy the public's hunger for scandal.

After all this justification for his and Augusta's lots in life, Byron looks to his past and to nature for comfort throughout the next five stanzas.

I feel almost at times as I have felt  
In happy childhood; trees, and flowers, and brooks....,

He yearns for the innocence of his youth. Reflecting on his childhood brings his attention to the wonder of the natural world immediately around him. From Lake Geneva, Switzerland, Byron writes Augusta:

Here are the Alpine landscapes which create  
A fund for contemplation;—to admire  
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;  
But something worthier do such scenes inspire:  
Here to be lonely is not desolate,  
For much I view which I could most desire,  
And, above all, a lake I can behold  
Lovelier, not dearer, than our own of old.

While the beauty around him is awe-inspiring, in the next two stanzas he is reminded of Augusta, of their past, and of his home. He longs for her to be with him. Then he remembers that it was he who left England so that he could be alone, which does not now seem so important. He claims not to be sad, but he admits detecting a change in his idea



of being alone. Byron writes of “their” lake, the one at his family home of Newstead Abbey—the “Hall.” He pleads of Augusta not to think he has forgotten their times together there. Some things have been forgotten, but not those he has loved.

According to Robinson, “Byron was momentarily suspended between hope for fulfillment and despair from frustration, “when he” simultaneously echoed the conclusion to Paradise Lost (‘The World was all before them’) and asked to be redeemed by Wordsworth’s Nature” (26-7):

The world is all before me; I but ask  
Of Nature that with which she will comply—  
It is but in her Summer’s sun to bask,  
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,  
To see her gentle face without a mask,  
And never gaze on it with apathy.

In the next stanza, Byron considers again his blame for their situations. If only he had ignored public scorn, he might have been more discreet about his feelings for Augusta, and neither would have experienced this grief. At times his public behavior was like kindling to the fire. The more the public reacted, the more recklessly he conducted himself. Now he is regretful.

Next Byron ponders, “With false Ambition what had I to do?” Love and fame were not his intentions when he started writing. “Surely I once beheld a noble aim.” What is done, is done: he has taken his place in history. He questions that he has a role for the future, for his life of 25 years had already been more eventful than a life of 100 years. In the 15th stanza, Byron reflects that he will take the rest of his life as it comes, because he cannot deny that he has had a good life so far, even with all of his trials. And like Wordsworth, he still has nature:

Nor shall I conceal  
That with all this I still can look around,  
And worship Nature with a thought profound.

Reconciled, Byron expresses to Augusta that they each will forever be in the other’s heart, for they have not only the love that will bind them always but also the blood:

It is the same, together or apart,  
From life’s commencement to its slow decline  
We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,  
The time which bound the first endures the last!

Byron and Augusta never again set eyes upon one another. Their correspondence continued, however, until his death in 1824. His love for his sister was genuine; that the relationship was mutual and endured is an attestation to its genuineness.

Shortly after going to Switzerland, Byron met Shelley, who was a great influence in Byron's life. Byron reluctantly entered into an affair with Claire Clairmont, stepsister of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and had a daughter, Allegra. Eventually Byron resumed his libertine lifestyle with numerous affairs, involving at least 200 women, and finally settled down with the Italian Teresa Guiccioli in 1819 (Abrams 505-6).

Contrary to what many of us today and in the past have commonly thought of Byron, it was not only his passion, temperament, and debauchery that earned him his reputation. Certainly those and other undesirable traits contributed largely to his public image. But Byron's honesty and frankness were also important ingredients in his composition. That he titillated the public with his indecent conduct was only partly for show, for he also could not help but act with sincere honesty. This was why he left England; he would rather exile himself than be dishonest about his love for Augusta.

In his private life, Byron was a decent man, quite different from his public image. Marchand tells us that "he had an extraordinary capacity for friendship, and that all his friends, men and women alike, were devoted to him." Marchand urges us, as we come to know Byron more completely, "to accept his idiosyncrasies and his deviations from approved conduct as we would those of a friend—in fact, as his own friends did" (xi).

Reading Byron's three poems to Augusta touched me in such a way that I became intensely intrigued with him, his relationship with Augusta, and his life. From my reading of Byron's biographies, letters, journals, and some of his works, I have become better acquainted with him. Before my research, I had held the same basic opinion that has been associated with him for the last 180 years. Now, with a clearer perspective of Byron's life and personality, I have an admiration for this man who, despite all the negative aspects clouding his reputation, was not only a great poet but an honest and compassionate person as well.

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# THE VICTORIAN LESSON OF GUINEVERE

## by Cheryl Marks

The tradition of the King Arthur legend and the romance between Lady Guinevere and Sir Lancelot runs deep in English literature; and despite the many variations to the story, the basic elements of the story are difficult to change. When writers operate under a tradition as large as the Arthur legend, changes that are made often reveal more about the times than the writers themselves.

The Victorian preoccupation with matters of human sexuality was connected to societal changes in areas of politics and scientific discoveries. For many Victorians, the passionate side of human existence was something to be feared; however, the “forbidden” aspect of passion made it something to be wondered about as well. The concern with human sexuality and the danger of letting the mind be ruled by the body are evident in two Victorian poems which retell the story of Guinevere, a woman who gave in to her feelings of human passion.

Tennyson’s section of “Idylls of the King” which is devoted to Guinevere’s story and William Morris’ “Defence of Guenevere” present very different portraits of this passionate woman; yet they both present Guinevere’s story as a lesson in human sexuality. Guinevere is condemned in both portraits as a woman who could not function within the boundaries society created for her.

When read separately, these two poems give an indication of the concern Victorians felt about human sexuality and its dangers. Tennyson’s poem tells the readers very directly what happens when passions are not controlled. Morris’ poem shows how intense these passions can be. When read together, these poems give a very vivid picture of the lesson that Victorian writers often felt compelled to teach through their works.

Tennyson’s poem derives its condemnation of Guinevere from its narrative approach to the story. The poem begins with Guinevere in the convent at Almesbury, where she has fled following the discovery of her romance with Lancelot. On a very literal level, this image surrounds an uncontrolled woman with humility and contemplative activity. The details of the story are given by an omniscient narrator. This method implies authority and gives distance to the moral teaching found in this poem.

Tennyson’s treatment of Guinevere informs the reader about the dangers of passion and human sexuality by directly telling the story of a woman who caused a kingdom to fall because of her indiscretion. The judgment of Guinevere’s behavior comes from other characters in the poem and, therefore, prompts the reader to judge her in a similar manner.

When Tennyson gives the situation of Guinevere before she and Lancelot were discovered, he talks of her "guilt" (59), her "vague spiritual fear" (70) and her growing trouble (83). These terms very obviously suggest that her behavior is inappropriate. When Guinevere and Lancelot are discovered, she says, "I am ashamed for ever" (110). Because the poem is not explicit in what Guinevere has done wrong, her connection with Lancelot and her admission that she was a married woman (118) leave the reader to imagine the magnitude of the transgression. This strengthens the teaching element of the poem because the exact nature of the wrong is unknown, and the arbitrary boundary between passion and control encourages all readers to question their own behavior.

Much of Guinevere's condemnation comes from her own feelings of guilt, and she specifically grieves over how the king and the kingdom must hate her (155-156). However, the young maid who attends Guinevere in the convent, unknowingly, condemns the queen to her face. The maid, who knows only to obey (184), comments about how she would handle such a wicked Queen (207-210). The maid tells how wonderful the kingdom was before the "sinful" Queen came to Camelot (229-268). This long passage shows how all things good and enjoyable are destroyed by the connection with human sexuality, which in this poem is exemplified by Guinevere.

Within the frame of this conversation between Guinevere and the maid, Tennyson adds an interesting twist to the story. When Guinevere taunts the maid by asking if the people could see what was coming (271-273), the comment encourages readers to consider their own lives and what the future may hold if certain behaviors are not controlled. This comment by Guinevere is the only real sign of assertiveness on her part in this poem.

Gradually, Guinevere becomes more and more upset by the conversation, and her guilt gnaws at her until she feels the maid has been sent to induce her to confess (306-308). When Guinevere finally dismisses the maid, the action is described as "sudden" and "wrathful" (354), and she is the victim of a "storm of anger" (359). All these terms connect her with emotion and lack of control.

The contrast between passion and control in this poem is especially striking when Guinevere compares her early days with Arthur and Lancelot. When she remembers being with Lancelot, the poem focuses on the physical lushness of the landscape and their conversation. When she remembers seeing Arthur, she thinks of him as "cold, high, self-contained, and passionless"—not like Lancelot (402-403). Although Guinevere had the opportunity to behave in a manner proper to a queen, she stepped out of her prescribed role to enjoy the benefits of a dramatic and passionate life.

At the end of the poem, Guinevere begins a "passionate utterance" (607). This action again shows her desire to experience everything fully and completely—without restraint or moderation. She admits that she wanted warmth and color (642) from Lancelot because he represented the passion she desired. She passed over the duty (652) to love



Arthur: and not only does she sorely regret her behavior, but the kingdom must also pay for her actions.

Arthur is the other character to condemn Guinevere. He comes to the convent and says her only children were sword and fire, red ruin, and the breaking of laws (422-423). These images all represent emotion, careless action, and lack of moderation.

Arthur's explanation of what he believes is proper behavior for his knights (465-474) speaks to the Victorian consciousness. He stresses that the knights keep down the "base" part of themselves (477) and do not honor the subtle mastery of passion (475-476). Arthur then recalls Guinevere's sin with Lancelot along with the sins of others, including Tristan and Isolt (484-488). He says that a false woman stirs the pulse and poisons the young (518-519); and he remarks that he can no longer touch her flesh because it was through her flesh that she sinned (548-552). As the male authoritarian figure in this story, Arthur represents the patriarchal Victorian determination to keep tight controls on issues of morality and behavior. Because Arthur does not approve of Guinevere's behavior, Victorian readers are also more likely to join him in reprimanding her behavior, and by not tolerating it in their own lives will work against the forces of human passion.

Unlike Tennyson's poem, Morris' "Defence of Guenevere" allows the reader to judge Guinevere's past behavior from the view of her current behavior and take the lesson right from the situation itself rather than from the implied message of the narrator. This poem is important as a support of the assertions Tennyson makes in his treatment of Guinevere because it explicitly reveals what kind of person she was and why she allowed her passions to rule her mind.

Morris' poem opens with Guinevere standing before her accusers, "She threw her wet hair backward from her brow, / Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek, (3-4). This description, concentrating on selected elements of Guinevere's physical description, presents the image of a very sensual woman. Before she even speaks, Morris identifies Guinevere as a woman defined by her sexuality.

After the opening scene, Morris' poem is a departure from the typical portraits of Guinevere because she is allowed to defend herself. Guinevere is portrayed as a woman of feeling and spirit, but she comes across as hysterical because she doesn't restrain the passion in her speech. It would seem that Morris gives Guinevere the voice she finally deserves; however, the actions and words he gives her to display do not suggest that he supports her. By using the form of the dramatic monologue, Morris allows Guinevere to condemn herself by exhibiting her passions for all to see; and her behavior in this poem can be seen as a dramatization of the passion that caused her infidelity.

The speech itself begins with Guinevere addressing her accusers with a hypothetical situation in which she represents the choice between heaven and hell. For Guinevere, the choice is her impending condemnation and her original decision to become involved with

Lancelot. However, this portion of Guinevere's defense does not seem to have a logical purpose. She begins by saying she knows that she should admit she is guilty and ask forgiveness because these great lords must know what they are doing by accusing her (13-15). Instead of doing what she says she should, she asks her accusers to imagine themselves as dying "quite alone and very weak" (17) and being asked to choose between two equally beautiful cloths (36). She ends this hypothetical situation by saying the wrong choice was made and, in this way, reveals that she realizes she had made the wrong choice but was unable to change it.

After this section comes a stanza that is repeated three times within the poem and serves as a unifying element to the otherwise unorganized content of Guinevere's defense. The stanza,

'Nevertheless you, Sir Gawaine, lie,  
Whatever may have happened through these years,  
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie',

also serves as a reminder to the reader that other people are present in the poem. Although Guinevere addresses Gawaine three times with these words, much of the time, she appears to be merely thinking aloud rather than defending herself. In saying these words, Guinevere appears to be very much in control of her actions and thoughts. This statement presents her as a woman sure of her innocence.

This first section of Guinevere's defense contributes to her condemnation as a passionate woman by the way she presents her situation to her accusers. She creates a dramatic scene in which the choice to be made is a matter of life and death. For Guinevere, her connection with Lancelot was equally severe, but by publicly revealing all the emotions she felt privately, she appears to lack decorum. She says, "Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known" (41). This plea by Guinevere suggests the despair she is feeling and the intensity of her emotions.

The contrast between her true passions and her attempt to defend herself comes when she addresses Sir Gawaine between each of the three sections. In the long passages, Guinevere displays drama, emotion, and desperation. In the short refrain, she seems to have regained control of her thoughts and is appealing to her accusers in a way they would find acceptable.

The second portion of her defense tells the story of her affair with Lancelot, but it is most interesting to examine how Morris describes her. He says:

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,  
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,  
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,  
A ringing in their startled brains, until



She said that Gawaine lied, then her voice sunk,  
And her great eyes began again to fill, (49-54).

Later in this section, Morris says that Guinevere was twisting her hair as she spoke (58-59) and passionately twisting her body as well (60). These images tell as much as the actual words about what Morris wants readers to think about Guinevere. In this section, she is portrayed most intensely as a woman completely taken over by her passions. Unlike Tennyson, Morris condemns Guinevere by letting the reader interpret the images in the poem rather than interpreting them for the reader.

When Guinevere tells her side of the story in this section, she speaks of her “eager body” (77) and of being “half mad with beauty” (109). She uses very lush, sensual terms to describe her feelings and actions. She speaks of “aching sorely” (137) and describes her terror when accused of adultery by Mellyagraunce. All of these images present Guinevere as a person who lived every aspect of her life fully and intensely, without moderation or contemplation. One gets the feeling that at times she may have wanted to control her passions but was unable to do so.

When Guinevere speaks of having called Lancelot to her chamber for company on the night they were discovered, she tells the story in such a way as to make the accusers feel jealous that it was not they who were chosen to favor the queen. She says that no man brings her flowers or sings to her or cares why she sighs (256-258). This passage shows Guinevere’s attempt to appeal to the accusers’ feelings of passion so that they will experience for themselves how intoxicating the feeling can be. She also displays cunning by trying to convince them of her innocence through ways that are not acceptable to a reasoning mind.

Guinevere ends her defense by saying that she will tell her accusers no more because they already know what happened after that night (277-279). Morris leaves the ending of the poem open for interpretation. Although this poem portrays a different Guinevere, the themes are still very male-oriented; and the poem ends with Lancelot approaching to again defend Guinevere.

It becomes clear that Guinevere’s defense only reaffirmed the previous opinion of her because Lancelot is required to rescue her. Unable to rescue herself because she is so wrought with incoherence and emotion, she is dependent upon Lancelot to save her because he operates within the boundaries of proper behavior.

Although at times Guinevere appears to be very eloquent and self-assured in Morris’ poem, when taken as a whole, Morris’ portrait of Guinevere is one example after another of how passionate and unrestrained she really was. Through these examples, Morris represents the Victorian concern with passion and human sexuality by allowing the reader to examine the mind of a woman who was condemned for her passionate behavior. Tennyson’s portrait also connects to this Victorian preoccupation because it gives the

background and the consequences of the behavior demonstrated in Morris' poem.

These two poems are an effective lesson on the Victorian ideas about human sexuality, and when read together they present a strong picture of the dangers of letting the mind be ruled by the body. While Tennyson's poem does more to explain exactly what happens when passions are not kept under control, Morris' poem explicitly shows how intensely passions can control the thoughts and actions of a person.

By building on the Romantic tradition of an interest in the Middle Ages, these poems demonstrate the tendency of Victorian writers to address the issues of their times. The dangerous sexuality and sensuality of a passionate woman like Guinevere make her story ideal to use as a lesson denouncing rampant human sexuality.



# THE MEASURE OF OUR WISDOM

by E. Thomas Sherry

It was midsummer of 1963. I was almost four years old, enjoying the slow passage of my favorite season. Summers used to last for eternity. The days were long and warm, the times less threatening. My new brother and I spent endless afternoons eating homemade Kool-aid popsicles under the emerald canopy of the immense oak tree in our front yard. We'd lose the plastic popsicle sticks and Dad would find them with the lawnmower on Saturdays, but they were the best grape popsicles in the world, bent sticks and all. Nobody worried about flavorings, colorings or sugar. Not yet.

One sunny morning I was playing alone on the sidewalk that led to our front porch, engaged in a new pastime, that of stepping on green caterpillars and squooshing their remains across the sidewalk. From her post at the living room window, my mother spotted this activity and came out the front door.

"What are you doing?" she asked crouching down beside me.

"I'm steppin' on worms," I told her, "See the pretty colors inside?" I said as I stepped on another one and raked its guts across the sidewalk. I was beaming with my discovery. Mom winced.

"These aren't just any worms," Mom explained gently, "They're special. Every living thing is special, remember? The worms, even the grass and trees, are alive just like you. If you step on these, then they die and can't grow up to become butterflies."

"What? Aw, they're just worms," I said beginning to feel slightly guilty.

"They're called caterpillars. Let's catch one and take it inside," she replied seeing the opportunity to make her point. "You'll see what happens."

We hunted down another specimen nearby. Mom brought a large Mason jar out of the garage, and we filled it with grass, leaves and a small stick donated by the oak tree. After punching holes in the lid with a can opener, I dropped the caterpillar, now curled up with fright and playing possum, into the jar. I took my new project in the house and placed it conspicuously on the piano for all to see. Something was going to happen to my green worm, but Mom didn't know exactly when. I watched as the caterpillar ate the leaves I brought it every day, but after awhile it stopped and seemed to be sleeping. Concerned, I would poke at it with the stick, and it would crawl around lazily before snoozing off again.

One morning Mom woke me up early. "Hey, your caterpillar is spinning a cocoon! C'omon, it's time!" she announced. I stumbled out of bed, ran to the living room, and climbed up on the piano bench. My friend had crawled halfway up the stick and was

hanging from it, spinning a silk enclosure around itself. It wasn't the same pretty green anymore: it was a pale gray. I asked what it was doing; I thought my caterpillar was dying.

"Well, it's going to be in there awhile taking a nap," Mom said, "It's not dying; it's just tired." She explained that while inside the cocoon, the caterpillar would be changing and emerge later as a new creature. We watched in amazed silence for a long time as the caterpillar wove its bed to the stick.

Over the next several weeks I checked on the cocoon every day. The leaves and the grass in the jar wilted and turned brown. Mom would periodically move it to a more convenient location on the filing cabinet, but I would always return it to its rightful place next to the bust of Chopin on the piano. Impatient with the whole process, I opened the jar one day to examine things more closely. I shook the stick. It rattled like there was a pea inside the chrysalis, but no sign of life showed itself. I suggested that we cut the cocoon open to see if the worm was all right, but Mother was opposed to this idea. So we waited.

Finally one evening while Mom was giving piano lessons the butterfly began to make its exit from the sarcophagus. Everyone was very excited. The students and their parents gathered around to watch while Mom went off to look for me.

"Tom, your caterpillar is coming out of the cocoon!" she called. I bolted into the living room and joined the group of observers. There, very slowly, emerged a very damp and different being than the one I had apprehended in the front yard. The butterfly sat on the stick and, quite pleased with itself, carefully moved its wings back and forth to help them dry. Like Houdini or Blackstone, it seemed to be taking a bow after performing a most astonishing feat for its impromptu audience.

The next morning Mom and I let the butterfly go from the front porch. It flitted away, and I imagined it was saying thank-you and goodbye. Maybe it was. We had read about butterflies in the encyclopedia at home and checked out books about them from the library to help ease my impatience during the transition. I knew the monarch had a new life and a long journey ahead of it, that it would never be happy or survive in its old glass home on the piano, but still I was sad to let it go. A well-timed visit to the root beer barrel around the corner alleviated all grief, and I had been given an invaluable and unforgettable experience with life. I didn't step on caterpillars any more - if I found them on the sidewalk or in the street, I returned them to a grassy place from the peril of shoes and cars.

The summer of 1963 was the pinnacle of a simpler time for us all, children and adults alike. The Age of Anxiety had not yet been born in my hometown of Elkhart, Indiana. A youthful John Kennedy had captured the hearts and mind of all America. Unending peacetime prosperity seemed likely as we consumed more and more of the Earth's resources and hitched our expectations to the stars. The assassin had not wiped out our



symbols of hope with the squeeze of a trigger. There was no outcry against the established authorities. Hardly anyone took unconventional drugs. Southeast Asia contained only an unnoticed handful of military advisors. There was no disco, no terrorism, no AIDS epidemic, and no reason to be concerned about anything as bizarre as the greenhouse effect. Technology had not exceeded the limitations of our generally accepted system of ethics. We were secure in our purpose for living and in the love of our families. Life came in black and white then; there wasn't very much gray.

1963 cannot pass into the chronicles of things past, for its lesson on life and living things remains an important part of me today. I still return stray caterpillars to safety when I see them.

Where have all the green caterpillars gone? Where are they? Has anyone else noticed their departure? Once an everyday sight in Northern Indiana, they are now rare. I suspect that we have chemically reduced their numbers to new lows along with those of the praying mantis, the fireflies, the crickets, the walking sticks, and other species that once thrived in this area. It is a sad irony that the creatures that inspired such awe and marvel at the mystery of life for me as a child are the ones that aren't around much anymore?

We are all older now, and we think we are wiser. Perhaps we will be truly wise when we realize that we do not own the Earth's resources in the same sense that I did not own the caterpillar. Who can own a butterfly, an ocean, or a rainforest teeming with undiscovered life? No, we are not owners; we are merely custodians of the Earth. We are here for a human lifetime, barely a moment in the ongoing cycles of our planet's history, yet we have the ability to influence that history more than any other inhabitants. The legacy we leave for tomorrow will be the measure of our wisdom, of our respect for the lives of our children. Will we pass on to them a reverence for the world and our fellow earthlings, or will we bequeath them a useless and poisoned planet as unconducive to their journey and survival as the butterfly's jar?

# A GILDED CAGE IS STILL A CAGE

by Chuck Adams

Prisons represent large cages that, whatever the beauty of their landscaped grounds, their modernistic buildings, or their progressive programs, function to restrain men, women, and children precisely as the bird is held captive in its cage. While it may be true, as Richard Lovelace penned to Althea in the seventeenth century, "Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage" (Oxford 154:9), I believe that the nicest penal facility is made no less a cage by its having been made into a gilded one. The prisoner knows a punishment greater than that imposed on him or her by the environment of a particular prison; because, from the heart, he or she feels keenly the pain of separation from loved ones and the absence of freedom. He may run upon lush, sweet-smelling grass. She may stroll beneath verdant canopies of lovely tall trees. Both understand the music one hears when the songbird sings in its cage, for they, too, are not free.

The Westville Correctional Center is the epitome of the modern penal facility. Set in northwest Indiana in the rolling land of farm country, it is a spacious institution that has clusters of buildings spaced hundreds of yards apart. Each cluster is comprised of several buildings that are dormitories for prisoners, a dining room and kitchen, classrooms and libraries, gymnasiums or an auditorium, a chapel, industrial shops, storerooms, warehouses, a visiting room, and administrative offices. Throughout the facility one's view includes scenes of immaculately landscaped lawns and the sculpted bark and luxuriant foliage of hardwood trees. In some places, one cannot see the razorwire-topped fences which delineate the perimeter of the medium security areas of the prison or the concrete, steel, and glass gun-towers that perch high above and just outside them.

The red of bricks and brown or beige shades of the sandstone blocks which form the buildings blend well with surrounding pastoral scenery. Farmers toil in their fields nearby to change them from the sere brown plots of spring into the patchwork of golden wheat, tall tassels of heavy-laden cornstalks, and the hues of red, green, yellow, orange, white, gold, and brown of the autumn fields ripe unto the harvest. The postage-stamp-size green lawns near farmhouses sprout their own gay colors each week when sheets, towels, jeans, dresses, shirts, blouses, socks, and other clothes wave from clotheslines as soft breezes stir them. Garden plots and truck farm fields of the correctional center appear to merge with surrounding farms so that no clear-cut line of division is ascertained.

Other sights which lend themselves to a semblance of normalcy abound. Mallard ducks raise families each summer within the central area of lawns and playing fields here. A large pond at the northeast edge of the occupied part of the prison grounds attracts Canada geese, herons, and other waterfowl in their twice-yearly migrations. Sometimes, the geese pass overhead in such rafts that V's stretch as far as one can see. Rabbits,



skunks, and feral cats that accept food from some and cautiously allow a few to pet them maintain an uneasy truce most of the time, if they do not associate together. Ground squirrels are preyed upon by cats which skulk about with their bellies low to the ground or fly forth from bushwhacking positions in the low limbs of trees, while prisoners pray for their safety and pamper them with sweet morsels of cookies or the juicy, lime-green small end of a piece of celery. Killdeer pretend to have broken wings during the three weeks that their eggs are in the nest in the ageless natural protective device which safeguards their species.

Within the dormitories, men live in semi-private rooms which are set across from one another along halls that are perhaps one hundred feet long and twelve feet wide. Each room is the size of a small hotel room. Along with a bed for each man, every room has wall lockers and nightstands for storage of possessions. Ceilings are high, and there is a sense of spaciousness. Two wings of housing on each of the two floors of the dormitory buildings are separated by discrete dayrooms and one central enclosed security office which is the station for a correctional officer. Dayrooms are gathering places where men watch TV, play cards or boardgames at four-man tables, make telephone calls, study lessons for Adult Basic Education, G.E.D., vocational, religious, or college programs of study, or write letters home.

From spring until late in the fall, the many hues of brightly colored flowers please the eye as their fragrances please the nostril. The springy grass makes a carpet to walk upon or a lawn to lie back on to take the sun. The leaves of trees emerge as nubs upon twigs during the spring and fall erratically to the ground after they are painted in their autumnal hues, but they afford shade during the long summer season and beauty for those who behold them through all three seasons. These and the other sights described are pleasing to the eye and soothing to the spirit.

The first-time visitor to the Westville Correctional Center might well wonder whether this is a community center or college campus until he or she sights the fence that surrounds the inhabited area. But the prisoner knows too well that beauty of design or excellence of programs do not from a prison its imprisoning barriers take, nor remove the pain of separation felt by anyone confined within the cage which all prisons make. A gilded cage is still a cage.

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# NOSE TO TOES

## by Susan Bortell

The years of the jogger are wanning. The '90's, though just begun, are pencil marked on a master list somewhere as the time in which thousands of people will pay millions of hard-earned dollars for one or more of the cosmetic surgery procedures now available. Come on now, don't lie to me or yourself. Don't sit there reading this while you shake your head pretending that you've never harbored under the delusion that your face and body were the only things keeping you from success, riches, and joy in life.

I hate smugness in those who lie.

According to many of the "experts" I've repeatedly seen on *Oprah* and other talk shows which strive for some degree of semi-reputable status, this decade will be known as the era of renewal the lift, the tuck, the implant, the suck, and the ever-popular rhinosizing.

And, don't tell me that you've never looked in the mirror and been gripped by the immediate desire either to enter a home for the terminally mediocre or sneak out of town under cover of darkness. It's a human failing; not many people are really pleased with the image in the mirror staring back at them every morning. This observation is based on the assumption that you don't help Mel Gibson shave.

So, remove all the money from your savings, forget the orthodontia for the kids (your more important), erase all guilty thoughts about altering what you've been born with (a genetic error, no doubt), and head out for Plastic City.

I'm quite the authority; I've made the trip. Sadly, my mirror image, similar to that of a very old, wrinkled, sea captain (sort of an Ahab with bleached hair and acne), was the impetus for the first thought of surgery. Caught in the spell of my own reflection, I never bothered to mentally compute or consider the reasonable FACTS before I went under the knife.

Instead, I chose to listen to faulty information and referrals from well-meaning friends who didn't know a nose job from a Ford. Rather than boost my morale by being supportive, they chose instead to use the old "God gave you that face; you should be happy with it" line. I became convinced that either their mirrors had been playing a cruel joke on them every morning, or they should consider a quick trip to the ophthamologist.

However, these people were supposed to be my friends; I could count on them. Based on their well-meaning advice, I visited a surgeon who had done the surgery on "...a close personal friend of one of Aunt Ida's second cousins who used to have nine toes on one foot AND a problem with sinus congestion." So, caught up in the whole thing, while also writhing in self-hatred, I picked up the phone and made an appointment.



The word “mistake” began to take on a whole new meaning at this point. While the doctor’s credentials seemed to be in order, I wasn’t crazy about the guy’s attitude from the jump. When I told him I wanted to look like a movie star, he snickered. Rather than allowing our personality conflict to keep me from everlasting beauty and happiness, I figured that he knew surgery I knew verbs.

I was in the hospital overnight. It was only after the bandages were removed from my nose that I realized the good doctor and I had hit a snag in our understanding of WHICH movie star I wanted to look like. We *obviously* were thinking of different ones. While I was leaning toward CHER, the doctor obviously had Karl Malden in mind.

When I complained, I was met with a cavalier attitude which hadn’t been present prior to the surgery while I was forking over every cent I had. The doctor felt he had done a superb job; after all, my nose was still located somewhere close to the center of my face. This startling fact coupled with the realization that I could still blink both eyes seemed to the doctor to be a major medical breakthrough. I, on the other hand, sat there glaring and considering the time I’d spend in maximum security if this man were to meet with an unexplained “accident.” I’m gutless; he’s still alive.

Through the years I’ve grown accustomed to the “good doctor’s” work. I can’t say that my life has taken a terrible turn for the worse due to my surgical slip-up, but every time I look in the mirror, I have the overpowering compulsion to sell travelers checks.

Based on this experience, I thought it best to compile a list of tips that just might save some poor unsuspecting soul with a savings account OR a Mastercard the pain and/or anguish I’ve suffered. Do yourself a favor; use your head before you rush in to have any bodily part or parts surgically altered. Consider the following as a survival check-list to be consulted prior to any rash, impulsive decision making.

1. When selecting a surgeon, always check his or her credentials. If the license reads “Doctor of Goat Neutering, Wheel Alignment, and Nose Jobs” — get out of the office fast.
2. Never sign a surgical permission form that contains blank spaces or is endorsed by Gumby.
3. Never have you eyelids “tucked” by any doctor who works part-time at McDonald’s.
4. Beware of the surgeon who says “Oooops” at any time during your visit.
5. Be suspicious when you see autographed photos of Lon Chaney, Boris Karloff, John Merrick, or Bella Lugosi hanging anywhere in the doctor’s office.
6. Be aware that liposuction is NEVER done with a green garden hose and a Hoover.

7. Be careful of the surgeon who wears glasses with "Coca-Cola" printed on the lenses.
8. Put your money away if the cosmetic surgeon also holds a license in proctology.
9. Know that good surgeons never take naps during your examination.
10. Hesitate if none of the doctor's patients are still living.
11. Avoid any surgeon who has ever sold used cars, worked at NBC, or is on the Board of Directors at Playdough.
12. DO NOT, under any circumstances, allow a cosmetic surgeon to force you to sign an organ-donor card.
13. Last, but certainly not least, remember that a competent cosmetic surgeon NEVER has a Mr. Potato Head on his desk.

If you follow my advice, you'll stand a good chance of finding a qualified surgeon. Good luck if you're in the market for a new look. Of course, you could always avoid the hassle completely if you bought a ski mask. It covers a multitude of sins, but you'll look damn conspicuous at the beach!!



# BIOGRAPHIES

**CHUCK ADAMS**, a sophomore, resides in Westville. He is a General Business major.

**ZUHAIR AL-AARAJI**, who resides in Michigan City is a freshman English major.

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**SUSAN BORTELL**, may hold the record for her appearances in Portals. A four-time winner, she is also the editor of the campus newspaper, Rapport.

**CRYSTAL BURKHART**, a freshman from Valparaiso, plans to major in elementary education.

**MARY KELLEY**, who resides in Michigan City, is a freshman Communications major.

**CHERYL MARKS**, a senior, appeared in least year's issue of Portals. Also a winner in the All-Campus Purdue Writing Contest, she is a tutor in the Writing Center. Cheryl resides in Wanatah.

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